

***Hypomedon debilicornis* (Wollaston, 1857) (Col.: Staphylinidae) breeding in Surrey**

*H. debilicornis* was described by Wollaston (1857. *A catalogue of the coleopterous insects of Madeira*. British Museum. London.), under the name *Sunius debilicornis*, from a single specimen taken in Madeira by a Mr Bewicke and presented to him by the captor. Since then, the beetle has been found in many parts of the world in both the northern and southern hemispheres, including oceanic islands suggesting that it may have been distributed by commercial activities.

The first British specimens (recorded as *Chloecaris debilicornis*), were found in 1989 in farmyard debris at Helindon in Northamptonshire (grid reference SP 54) (Drane, 1994. A belated note on *Cloecaris debilicornis* (Wollaston) (Staphylinidae) new to Britain. *Coleopterist* 3: 2-3.). Nothing more appears to have been seen of the species here until 1996, when it was encountered in decomposing farmyard straw at Heckfield, North Hampshire (SU 76) (Harrison, 1997. A second site for *Hypomedon debilicornis* (Wollaston) (Staphylinidae) in Britain. *Coleopterist* 6: 66). At both sites specimens were numerous, indicating that the beetle had bred locally. In 1998, Booth (1999. Specimen exhibited at the Annual Exhibition. *Brit. J. Ent. nat. Hist.* 12: 172), obtained a single specimen from a flight interception trap at Silwood Park, Berkshire (SU 97).

We can now report another breeding site situated near Little Bookham, Surrey (TQ 15). The beetles were first noted on 1 December 1999 and were in a large heap of floor sweepings from a nearby stable for horses. The heap was composed mostly of straw, but with a little well decomposed dung. Other specimens were found on a further visit by us to the site on 8 December and on later visits by other coleopterists. Among the other beetles present were numerous examples of *Euconnus duboisi* Méquignon and *Scydmaenus rufus* Müller & Kunze.

We have dissected 12 specimens from the heap at Little Bookham and all have proved to be females. This was also the case with specimens from Helindon and Heckfield and with 60 examples from many localities world-wide examined by Coiffait (1961. Les *Hypomedon* d'Europe et de la région méditerranéenne. *Rev. fr. Ent., Paris* 28: 16-40). Later, however, a specimen from tropical Africa was found to be a male (Coiffait, 1984. *Nouv. Revue Ent.* 8: suppl. 5 Coléoptères staphylinides de la région paléarctique occidentale. 142-143). It seems reasonable to accept that when the species evolved many years ago it had sexual reproduction and that parthenogenesis arose later. How far parthenogenesis has been a factor in promoting the present-day cosmopolitan occurrence of this species is a matter for speculation. The ability of a virgin female on reaching a new area to reproduce without the involvement of a male might seem an advantage, but many equally cosmopolitan beetle species do not exhibit parthenogenesis. Conversely, many parthenogenetic beetle species are not cosmopolitan.— JOHN OWEN, 8 Kingsdown Road, Epsom, Surrey KT17 3PU. jaowen@talk21.com & A.J.W. ALLEN, 56 Windsor Way, Alderholt, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 3BN.